

## A SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHT INTO THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE: A CASE STUDY OF KASHMIRI CULTURE

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### ABSTRACT

*Life full of surprises, you never know what is stored for you in its next move. Nothing stops for you, everything is just going. Sometime at any stage when we look back we get puzzled by the change; we forget that when we have not remained the same how we can expect the world to be stagnant for us. In this passage of change, marriage has also altered itself to fit the demands of time. Marriage as an institution has different connotations in different societies. Let us forget about the different societies and talk about the different time spans through which this institution has gone and amended by the people accordingly. What is change I am talking about? It is the structural and functional aspect of this very institution which has turned complex from simple and very complex from within. What are the reasons for this complexity? We will try to justify them through certain interviews in this paper. Kashmiri society can be considered orthodox and conservative one in comparison to other metro states of India. Being Muslim state marriage here is both religious as well as legal matter. We will not discuss what marriage is, how it is being practised but will try to understand the inner subject matter of it and its interior sensitivity and how it has gone affected.*

**KEYWORDS:** Kashmir, Culture, Marriage, Love, Divorce

### MARRIAGE

There is no definition which adequately covers all types of human marriage; different sociologists as well as anthropologists have given number of definitions and explanations. For example about forty years ago, anthropologist William Stephens said marriage is (1) a socially legitimate sexual union, begun with (2) a public announcement, undertaken with (3) some idea of performance, and assumed with a more or less explicit (4) marriage contract, which spells out reciprocal obligations between spouses and their children. (Stephens, 1963:7) We apply the broad definition of marriage generally used by cross-country comparative studies to include all forms of socially recognized unions: cohabitation, consensual unions, "free unions," and marriage legitimated by custom, religious rites, or civil law. The definition of marriage used in censuses, however, may be more variable than that used in standardized surveys. For the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), marriage is a self-defined state. Respondents are coded as married if they say so in response to questions on whether they are currently or were ever married or are living with a man. Thus age at first marriage is typically age at first cohabitation with the partner or husband. (Kishor, S. 2003) For censuses, countries typically define marriage to reflect the forms of marriage and union that are generally recognised and accepted, and they obtain such information accordingly. As a result, for the most part of data on marriage or union status are largely comparable between censuses and surveys. For

example, in Latin America census questions on marital or union status include the category "consensual union" because this is a widely occurring and acknowledged form of union in this region. However, in countries where cohabitation is much less common, for example in India "consensual union" may not be explicitly included as a category, with the result that this type of arrangement may be underreported.

In 2010, the media has reported that marriage is a falling institution. Public rhetoric often decries a societal retreat from marriage—that it is an increasingly obsolete institution. In contrast functionalists stress that to survive, a society must fulfil basic functions (i.e.) meet its basic needs. When functionalists look at marriage, they examine how they are related to other parts of society, especially the ways that marriage contributes to the stability of society. Marriage, family, and kinship systems are institutionalized social arrangements in all known societies. However, the nature of the arrangement differs greatly across societies, over time, and even within a given society at a specific time.

Throughout the world, marriage is an institutional arrangement between persons, generally males and females, who recognize each other as husband and wife or intimate partners. Marriage is a strictly human social institution and assumes some permanence and conformity to societal human norms. No doubt marriage as an institution is in a transitional phase, it can change its form and shape but it will remain always there in the society as a "social fact".

## METHODOLOGY

In general the methods and techniques of a particular study are determined by the nature of the problem. Besides for an efficient and reliable research various techniques are essential for having insight into the problem and the socio – economic environment in which the research is placed and the method of data collection must be related to the sort of problem on hand and to the social situation which represents itself to the sociologist. As such for an efficient and reliable research various techniques are essential for having insight into the problem.

The research has used interviews and participant observation as a primary source of data collection for the problem and also for conceptual clarity a good amount of secondary sources has also been consulted by the researcher.

## MARRIAGE VERSES TECHNOLOGY

As we know technology has touched every aspect of life and when we talk of marriage as an institution has not remained untouched with this flow of technology. In our society open interaction of opposite sexes is not so permissible, now a day it is changing its shape but still secondary (informal) sources of social control rule the behaviour of individuals. Previously marriages were mostly of arranged nature very rare cases of love marriages were found. But now with the emerging trend of social networking, it has changing its form. Social networking sites plus mobile phones make social interactions just a click process, which was not there a decade or two ago. It has also becoming a means of mate selection which was only the job of parents. It symbolizes that how much technology has affected our kinship ties and introduced into our lives replacing the most preferred things.

Rehana 23 from south Kashmir interacted accidentally with a guy from extreme north Kashmir and fall in love. After an interaction of a year got married to him, whose possibility was least as our culture does not permit these long distance marriages.

## INTERNAL CHAOS BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE

Like change is an inevitable process which no one can stop same can be said about the conflict between husband and wife. It is a known fact that – despite a couple's best intentions – conflict is a part of marriage. Conflict inevitably arises between two people who live intimately and who share mostly everything in life –from their goals and check books to their bedroom and children. At some point, their desires and approaches to life clash, sometimes mildly and sometimes quite harshly. And the societal constrains play their role to bind them together. People are not ready to be with each other but they have to, when it comes of a society like Kashmir, there is less

intimacy and more societal constrains which bind people, not always but mostly.

People were also inhibited from pushing the implications of the love match to their logical conclusion by the rigid redefinition of gender differences that undergirded the early versions of the love match. The Victorians defined love as the union of two opposite beings. Supposedly, it was the difference between men and women that made them love each other. Women loved men for strength and their knowledge of the outside world. Men loved women for their purity, their fragility, and their protection from knowledge of the outside world. In practice, however, the separation of male and female spheres and the cult of female purity created huge emotional and sexual tensions between men and women. Women often referred to men as “the grosser sex.” men suffered tremendous ambivalence about having sexual relationships with ‘good’ women-the kind of women they wanted as wives.(Coontz,2013)

The society here is woven in such a manner that if someone had a love affair which got public, the chance of whose are major as the news will be passed like breaking news to everyone. And then don't get married due to whatever reasons, the women mostly will be looked down and the man always plays the safe. The male will not be answerable; it is only the female who is the prey. This becomes one of the societal constrain to bind the people into the institution of marriage. The “LOVE “here as the basic reason lost its essence and “FEAR” takes the command. As already mentioned above Secondary sources (informal) of social control here play the greater role to mould the behaviour of individuals.

Romantic love was not unknown in the past, but it was not closely linked to marriage. In ancient India, falling in love before marriage was seen as an irresponsible, anti-social act. In the middle ages, the French defined love as a form of insanity that could be cured by sexual inter course, either with the object of infatuation or with someone else. Most societies through the ages discouraged people from marrying for such a fragile and self-indulgent reason as love.(Ibid) One of my respondent's Sumaya 29 years old had a love affair with a guy of her same age group, since she was sixteen. And after a lot of struggle with family (researcher had witnessed her facing violence from her father and uncles), she got engaged to a guy at the age of 20. Now after 13 years of relationship the guy does not want to marry her, but she is very adamant to marry him besides she knows that there is nothing left behind in between them. The girl told me that “who is going to marry me after this long journey as everyone knows about us, I am the ruined one, I will not leave him to enjoy his life, and he also has to suffer”. When the researcher interacted with a guy he said, that he is not comfortable with her, as she does not have any sort of exposure, “we lack understanding, and she is compulsion for me”.

Researcher found that both of them are concerned more about society, instead of their own aspirations. Sumaya still wants to marry him, in order to make him suffer as she knows now he is not comfortable with her. And the guy has to marry her because of societal compulsion. Here we are left with a question mark, that if initially people clam for LOVE with the passage of time where it does vanish?

At the initial stage of infatuation, (everything starts with infatuation) an individual tries to be his best which is almost acceptable by every soul. After a certain period of time the "REAL" emerges which becomes disturbing, as it contradicts with the previous one.

Dissatisfaction was as high among many people who subscribe to 1950s ideals of marital intimacy as among those who dissented from them. In a study of women's magazines of 1950s, historian Eva Moskowitz argued that the very advice columnists who were trying to help women save their marriages were also teaching wives to articulate their grievances. (Moskowitz, 1996)

When we look at marriages where roles are defined conventionally, where women is supposed to be at home, taking care of children, elderly and her husband, and men go out for the survival of the family. In this kind of marriage the possibility of conflict are least. In this kind of marital relation the level of interdependence is high and the chances of stability are also high, as both are incomplete without each other. More complexity brings more chaos. With the changing time the priorities of individuals got changed. "Simplicity brings acceptance and complexity means questioning, which brings chaos". Researcher as a participant observer has gone through a marriage whose example is used to quote as an ideal marriage. Abdul Hamid and Masrat marriage of 17 years; both are highly satisfied with each other, where researcher found love, affection and sacrifices.

When researcher visited them, there was not the internal chaos which we are talking about. There were some other problems but the marriage was peaceful. Both were practicing their respective role efficiently and without questioning. Researcher analysed the reason behind was that they were not aspiring anymore; they believed that they have got the best. Both were illiterate, with very little exposure and truly dependent on each other. They shared the sameness in their thoughts which helps them to understand each other well.

### ASPIRATIONS AND MARRIAGE

What do we mean by priorities have changed? Now individuals have started aspiring for higher, different, they want to be known and in this rat race, our family, marriage, has subsided to a very large extent. Previously women were aspiring for a good, well settled husband. That was all they

wanted for a prosperous life. Women wanted to have a good qualification for a good husband. But now women before getting married wanted to settle down, they have become more career conscious. This directly or indirectly affected the marriage prospectus. While moving outside the conventional roles are often disturbing in our patriarchal society. Men are not ready to accept this changing phenomenon, as it does not suit their nature. By nature researcher means the process of socialisation, where men are supposed to be on the decision making front and women of course to be submissive. One of my respondents Suraya (name changed) got proposal from her colleague scholar Suhail, while sharing their views, Suraya told him that "if after marriage I got some problem in the relationship I will take divorce". Suhail "I was so puzzled that how could a girl think like that", he said "she is not suitable for marriage". Men here are not ready to digest the views that contradict their conventional ingrained ideas.

The changing attitude has also delayed marriages, previously 25 was considered the upper limit but now it is moving towards 30s. W.J Goode notes that in the west, the age at marriage for both men and women dropped during the twentieth century, leading him to conclude that predicting trends in age at marriage as a consequence of other secular changes in society is problematic: when (conjugal) systems begins to emerge in a society, the age at marriage is likely to change because the goals of marriage change, but whether it will rise or fall cannot be predicted from the characteristics mentioned so far. In a conjugal system, the youngsters must now be old enough to take care of themselves, i.e.; they must be as old as the economic system forces them to be in order to be independent at marriage. (Goode, 1963) According to a survey by India today, a national weekly magazine, 55% of the youth today prefer career over marriage. Marriage for this section is either a compulsion or convenience. Divorce is an easy option without any hesitations.

### DIVORCE OR NOT?

When we talk of divorce, it is not so easy process in our society. There is not only the involvement of two individuals in the process but two families. If a person decides for divorce he/she has to convince their families too. People have to compromise for their family and children. And the outcome of this compromise always brings suffering to the children. They always have to face the psychological pressure by living in such a family which is not family a lot. This is the real chaos which skipped the minds of sociologists to be studied, as the data of which does not come in any census report. What consequence this chaos of every day will bring to the children for whom this so called "compromise" is made. This not only ruins the future of the couple only but also miserably affects the children. Divorce or not? This question

haunts when the consequences of both are analysed. We know that divorce brings misery to the children, but “compromise” also ruins them including the couple.

One of my respondents Bilal Ahmad 28, married from last four years with a son of three, wants divorce from his wife. When i interviewed him on the issue, he said, “i want to divorce her from last two years but my family was not supportive, and now they have understood me, and i have filed for the same in the court”. When i asked for the reason, he said that she has ruined my life; she is four-five years older than me. What researcher observed, he does not find her attractive any more. Besides their marriage was of arranged nature, researcher has observed him very excited for the marriage, though he did not know her at all before marriage. He married her in excitement and is also divorcing her in excitement, because when researcher asked him will you marry again? He responded that “if I wish, I have many options out there”. Every time it has proved that age of excitement is very little, after that very stage individual has to face the reality” (the bitter one).

#### CONCLUSION

What has been analysed is that it is all about living together. When a couple live together for a good span of time they generate a sort of interdependences, a “habitual relationship” and above all societal constrains which sometimes make them to live together away from their wishes.

Man is a curious being, always got tempted by something new, love change. It can easily be seen in the first few months or few years of marriage. Excitement level in arranged marriages is higher than that of love marriages is higher backed with the fact that there is something new to deal with.

What is compatibility? It is evident that no two men on this earth are alike; people are different with different natures. Then how can people expect compatibility, there are

always compromises which keep the relation alive, sometimes hidden and sometimes visible.

The more people are exposed to external environment the more complexity emerges in their marital relations. Kashmir being highly patriarchal society is not yet ready for the emancipation of women, which at times create rift in their relations.

There are various researches which substantiate the data regarding divorces rates, late marriages, early marriages and the people who are not married at all. But the internal chaos which is not visible cannot be justified with any data, needs to be understood.

Bigger part is children; here people share very close intimacy with their children, which mostly become the part of their compromise to sustain their married life.

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